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Romania

Planting Seeds

Romanian Legislation for GMO Seeds

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Prepared by:

Holly Higgins

U.S. Embassy

Drafted by:

Tony Pavel

Report Highlights:

On January 31, 2000, Romania published the legislation on GMO seeds. The Romanian GMO legislation used as language the provisions of EU Directives 90/219 and 90/220. U.S. seed companies tested and registered seven biotech varieties (six for corn and one for soybeans) using the provisions of the Romanian legislation for basic seeds. In 1999 only the GM soybeans were marketed and planted on 15,000 hectares. The average yields of GM soybeans were 3.5-4.0 MT/HA or more than double compared to conventional soybeans. A recent market study estimated the possible trade impact of GM seeds in Romania at about \$3.0 mln. for corn and soybeans.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Bucharest[RO1], RO

Romanian GMO Legislation

On January 31, 2000, Romania published in the "Official Monitor" (the equivalent of the "Code of Federal Register") a Government Ordinance/Decision on development, testing, use and marketing of GMOs and of their products. This regulation was written entirely in accordance with EU's Directives. The legislation stipulates that any changes or amendments of EU's Directives related to GMOs will be also incorporated in the Romanian text. At the same time, the regulation allows a shortcut method of registering a GMO, if the GMO is approved in the EU.

Following are some of the main provisions of the Romanian regulation on GMOs:

- The introductory part defines specific terms used in other section of the regulation.
- One section refers to the use of micro-organisms and GMOs under isolation which should be in accordance with EU's Directive 90/219. The terms of micro-organisms and GMOs use are clearly defined in order to not affect the population's health and the quality of the environment.
- Activities of production, testing, use, transportation, storage and marketing of GMOs should be authorized by a National Commission for Biological Security (further named National Commission or Commission). The same section stipulates that deliberate utilization in the environment, marketing and import/export of GMOs should be carried out according to provisions of EU's Directive 90/220.
- The following documentation should be provided for GMOs introduction in the environment:
 - a technical file which includes information on possible risk on people's health or damage to the environment;
 - a risk/impact study generated by GMOs as a result of their introduction in the environment;
 - information on results of GMOs deliberate introduction from within the country or from other countries.
- A very important provision of the legislation is the establishment of the National Commission within 60 days of the date when the regulation will take effect. This organism will be made of 19 members, of which 12 representing various Academies and 7 government officials who have responsibilities on GMOs.
- The members of the National Commission will be nominated as following:
 - three members will be nominated by the National Academy of Sciences;
 - three members will be nominated by the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences;
 - three members will be nominated by the Academy of Medical Sciences;
 - three members will be nominated by other biology and medical organizations and universities;
 - seven members nominated by government agencies who have responsibilities on GMOs (environment, health, agriculture and food, and consumer protection).
- The National Commission will elect four co-chairmen, each one representing the four main sectors listed in the previous paragraph.
- Commission's decision should be adopted through consensus or vote; each of the four co-chairmen has the right of veto. The veto should be explained in writing.
- The administrative costs of the Commission and its staff will be covered by fees charged when requesting licenses for activities covered by this legislation.
- The National Commission was given another important assignment, which is to inform and educate

consumers on GMO crops or food.

- The legislation established no threshold for labeling the GMO crops or food.
- The GOR designated the Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environment Protection as the national point of contact for any international legal document/organization to which Romania is a member party.

Market Development Opportunities

Starting with 1997, the U.S. seed companies tested and registered in Romania seven biotech varieties: six for corn and one for soybeans. In the absence of a GMO legislation, testing was allowed by GOR under the provisions of the law for basic seeds. Only the GM soybeans were marketed so far in Romania. The results of the first year (1999) convinced producers of advantages of GMO seeds: GM soybeans were planted on 15,000 hectares (about 20 percent of the total planted area). GM soybeans averaged 3.5-4.0 MT/HA, compared to only 1.6 MT/HA for conventional soybeans.

There are no doubts that Romanian producers appreciate advantages of GM crops: reduced input costs (20-30 percent), reduced pesticide usage, increased average yields and protection of the environment.

A conservative study made recently by a U.S. biotech company estimated the possible trade impact of GM seeds in Romania at about \$3.0 mln., of which \$1.65 mln. of corn and \$0.35 mln. of soybean seeds.

The U.S. biotech companies have decided to organize a "Biotech Group" in late 1999 who will meet regularly. Initially, the group was set up to counter inaccurate coverage of activities of U.S. biotech companies in Romania as reflected in a local English language weekly. Members of the group then decided to promote the positive aspect of GMO technology and identifies several methods to advance the case for GMOs. Members also decided to enlarge the group to cover other segments of the food/feed industry.,

The greatest concern of the "Biotech Group" is the composition of the Romanian "National Commission" who will oversee activities related to implementation of the legislation on GMOs. The "Biotech Group" will lobby actively to enlist as members of the "National Commission" on GMOs well-informed and open-minded persons who see the value of GMOs while instituting at the same time safeguards for Romanian consumers, based on a scientific approach.

USDA has recruited for the 1999 Cochran Program a group of six Romanian government officials who have responsibilities in the testing and registration process of GMOs and who also helped draft the Romanian legislation. As a follow-up to this activity, for the current Cochran Program, another group representing agricultural media will be given an opportunity to learn first hand on GMO crops and foods. It is hoped that these Cochran Program activities will have a positive impact on the future of GMO technology in Romania.

